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Barbara Chunn Jenkins
University of North Florida

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What Factors Have Been Identified
by Teachers as Reasons
for the Variations Between Academic Achievement,
or Teacher Assigned Grades,
and Standardized Test Scores
for Sixth Grade Students?

by

Barbara Chunn Jenkins

A thesis submitted to the Division of Curriculum and
Instruction in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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FACULTY SIGNATURES

Signature Deleted

Dr. Ann Stoddard

Signature Deleted

Dr. Donna Keenan, Committee

Signature Deleted

Dr. James Mittelstadt, Committee

Running head: FACTORS AFFECTING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Factors Affecting Student Achievement

Table of Contents

Abstract	2
Chapter	Page
I. Introduction.....	3
Problem Statement.....	4
Rationale.....	4
Purpose.....	5
II. Review of the Literature.....	7
Adolescence.....	7
Tests.....	11
Achievement.....	15
III. Design of Study.....	25
IV. Analysis.....	27
Conclusions.....	31
V. Summary.....	33
Appendix A	38
Appendix B	42
References	52

Factors Affecting Student Achievement

List of Figures

Figure 1	44
Figure 2	46
Figure 3	48
Figure 4	50

Abstract

This study was designed to determine what factors sixth grade teachers from selected sixth grade centers identified as the reasons for the variations between academic achievement, or teacher assigned grades, and standardized test scores for sixth grade students. Thirty-two teachers participated in a questionnaire survey that was specifically designed, through the use of research, for this study. The questionnaire was divided into four main categories. The categories were: Home Related Problems, Socio-economic Status, Child Related Problems, and Teacher Related Problems. The teachers ranked the factors in degrees from five to one. The ranked numbers were totaled and averaged. The teachers' responses identified Parent Attitude as the leading factor of Home Related Problems. Social Class was chosen as the factor from the Socio-economic Status. Self-confidence was the leading cause of Child Related Problems. Teacher Attitudes ranked the highest reason from the Teacher Related Problems.

Chapter I

Introduction

When students reach what is known as the preadolescent stage of maturity, certain developmental changes are evident (Greenberg, Stiegel, & Leitch, 1982). These developmental changes are physical, emotional, and mental.

The physical changes are the most obvious. The growth spurt, body hair, and skin changes are characteristics shared by both males and females. This stage is readily accepted by the males, but not the females (Peterson, Tobin-Richards, & Boxer, 1983).

Emotional changes also occur during adolescence. Students experience periods of rebellion, restlessness, and moodiness, and changes in self-image. There are also changes in the relationships with parents and peers (Peterson et al., 1983).

Mental development is another complication to be experienced during adolescence. Cognitive changes are obvious at this stage. The changes occur with improvements shown in standardized test scores, but declining teacher assigned grades (Peterson et al., 1983).

Physical, emotional, and mental changes combined with peer pressures, pressures from home, and pressures from school create problems for the adolescent child in

today's society (Greenberg et al., 1982). There are times when students have difficulty functioning in the school environment. This difficulty is due in part to norms set by teachers (Thornburg, 1983). Teachers fail to realize that children in today's society cannot reach the norms that are expected of them.

Problem Statement:

What factors have been identified by teachers as reasons for the variations between academic achievement, or teacher assigned grades, and standardized test scores for the sixth grade students?

Rationale:

Sixth grade teachers observe noticeable changes in individual academic achievement, or teacher assigned grades, and standardized test scores, as evidenced by SAT reading test scores and SAT math test scores. Students who entered S.P. Livingston Sixth Grade Center in the fall of 1985 had a standardized test score of 63.45 in reading, and a standardized test score of 70.59 in math. At the end of the sixth grade the same group of students had a standardized test score of 59.99 in reading and a standardized test score of 63.43 in math (Duval County Public Schools, 1986).

Teachers realize that most of the time during adolescence students will continue to make progress on

standardized tests, but will show a decline in teacher assigned grades (Peterson et al., 1983). Research has identified variables that cause the decline in academic achievement, or teacher assigned grades. A study needs to be made to identify the reasons teachers believe this decline is occurring in academic achievement, or teacher assigned grades.

Current research shows there is a need to implement and evaluate instructional programs so that corrective measures can be identified (Peterson et al., 1983). Research also indicates that adolescents need role models (Schvaneveldt & Adams, 1983). Child rearing practices and socio-economic levels contribute to school readiness and to later achievement in the sixth grade (Hess, Holloway, Dickson, & Price, 1984).

This study will be conducted to identify the problem areas as identified by teachers. With the identification of the problems by teachers, results will be totaled and percentages will be calculated.

Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to determine by use of a questionnaire, what variables have been identified by teachers as factors that influence the variations between academic achievement, or teacher assigned grades, and standardized test scores. Data collected from the

teacher questionnaires will be shown on bar graphs. The findings will indicate the problem areas that teachers strongly agree are the factors that affect the declining student achievement, or teacher assigned grades, while standardized test scores continue to improve.

Chapter II

Review of the Literature

Early adolescence, preteens, or puberty is a critical stage in the lives of boys and girls. This age is also known as a transition stage with occurring body changes that affect relationships, the self-image, cognitive capacity, personality, and behavior changes. Adolescence is viewed as a period of naturally occurring regression in the individual's life, which is more severe for boys than for girls (Marcia, 1983). The following research will explain how developmental changes affect adolescence, testing, and academic achievement, or teacher assigned grades, during the sixth grade. The research will also reveal the factors that teachers indicate as being the causes for the decline in academic achievement, or teacher assigned grades.

Adolescence

During this transition stage of pain and confusion in the life of an adolescent there is a critical need for an understanding of the growth rate. The body exhibits an extremely fast rate of growth. This growth spurt constitutes changes that are associated with height, body hair, and skin changes in both sexes. During this growth transition breast development and menarche occurs in females. In males at this age, facial

hairs and voice changes become noticeable (Peterson et al., 1983).

In a growth study made by Peterson et al., (1983) surveys were made in the fall and again in the spring using sixth graders. This survey consisted of five levels of growth responses. They were body hair, facial hair, voice change, and growth spurt for males. For females, the survey listed body hair, skin change, menache, and breast development. The overall index indicated that breast development was the strongest indicator with body hair running a close second for females (Peterson et al., 1983). Males at this age feel attractive while females express negativeness.

In addition to imminent physical changes during preadolescence, this is a period when new and extreme changes occur in personality and behavior (Adams, 1983). Personality can be expressed as the developmental nature of individuals and their interactions with society in which they live (Thornburg, 1983). Understanding is needed from all adults with whom adolescents associate. Children experience spans of moodiness, restlessness, and rebellion. There are rapid shifts from self-confidence to childishness (Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, [CHEW], 1972). Students at this preadolescence age experience difficulties in relationships with parents

and peers, and changes in self-image (Greenberg et al., 1982).

This developmental stage is also complicated by decision-making. This process is actually forced upon some preadolescents before they are ready to accept it (Schvaneveldt & Adams, 1983). Students desire to become involved in decision-making, but are not prepared to accept the responsibility (Schvaneveldt & Adams, 1983). Parents in today's middle-class working society are becoming democratic role models for adolescents by involving the child in decisions and planning (Schvaneveldt & Adams, 1983).

Decision-making at this age can be taught as a seven step approach. These steps are a systematic plan which includes exploration, crystallization, choice, clarification, induction, reformation, and integration (Schvaneveldt & Adams, 1983). When adolescents follow these steps, making decisions will become a realization and not a forced issue (Schvaneveldt & Adams, 1983).

The decision-making approach can be a basis for the mental process of adolescence. As with the physical and emotional phases of the preadolescent age group, there are also problems to be considered in the cognitive area. Adolescents experience changes in cognitive capacity. The positive changes occur in early adolescence

with cognitive ability improving. This improvement is indicated in standardized test scores that tend to improve while academic course grades experience a decline (Peterson et al., 1983).

Socialization is an important phase in the life of an adolescent (Thornburg, 1983). School and community to the adolescent are places for socialization. Socialized school environments can also create difficulty for the adolescent. Teachers have stereotyped norms that are expectations for students (Thornburg, 1983). When the standards are not met the child can become labeled.

A curriculum should be developed especially for the adolescent's transition period (Allan & Dyck, 1984). Awareness, understanding, and challenging areas of study should be taught. Major emphasis should be placed on past experience, anticipated experience, and fears that the youths have encountered. Counselors and teachers should work together through this developmental stage.

Adolescence is a very difficult time for youth. With the problems encountered during physical maturity, the emotional changes, and the social pressures, a need for understanding is necessary. Parents, teachers, and counselors who work with preadolescents need to be aware of needs and how to respond (Allan & Dyck, 1984). Adolescents need role models as well as instruction that

can help gain direction in decision making (Schvaneveldt & Adams, 1983).

With puberty in American children developing earlier than in past generations a reality is forced upon adults. There is an urgency to meet the needs of today's youth (Schvaneveldt & Adams, 1983).

Tests

Webster (1965) defines "test" as a critical examination, observation, or evaluation. There are numbers of tests that are administered for many reasons. Tests have good uses, but there are instances when tests are misused (Ravitch, 1984).

In the past decade the U.S. taxpayers have become interested in the functioning of the public school system (Madaus & Greanen, 1985). More and more tax dollars are being spent on public school education while achievement test results declined (Madaus & Greaney, 1985). An increasing amount of pressure has been placed on educators to reform these findings. This information has encouraged the use of testing (Ravitch, 1984).

Ravitch (1984) states that tests have been used for a number of reasons. Tests are used for direction to measure strengths and weaknesses, for placement in math and reading, and to assess verbal abilities. Tests can serve as indicators of how well students are learning

specific skills. Tests are useful in helping diagnose educational problems. Counselors and teachers use tests to detect possible problems in learning.

Tests have been misused and have many disadvantages (Ravitch, 1984). Tests can measure only a narrow spectrum of abilities. Tests cannot measure valuable ways of thinking. Comprehension tests that require a single right answer choice do not fully measure the correctness of the reader's reading comprehension (Cullinan, Harwood, & Galda, 1983). Tests odds are misleading. There are situations when adolescent students will "freeze-up" and not score well. Tests cannot measure imagination, creativity, nor personal drive. Tests, in a sense, do not measure objectiveness. Tests cannot measure thoughtful reasoning, but will reflect fast reflection answers (Ravitch, 1984).

Tests are valuable for educators to use as a reference tool for explanations to give to legislators, taxpayers, and parents of adolescent students with poor academic progress. Some educators question the validity of scores by pointing out the number of minority students in the test-takers pool. Educators claim the decline in progress is caused by the large numbers of poor and minority students (Ravitch, 1984).

Numerous tests are used today; each given to assess

a specific value. For example, an IQ test is given to measure learning ability. The results will indicate if a child has below average, average, good, or excellent ability. However, IQ tests do not always give accurate results. IQ tests scores can change over the years. Results can vary due to the performance of the child on a specific day. The child's emotions and self-concept are factors to be considered. The child's health and physical condition are also contributing factors (DHEW, 1972).

The California Achievement Test, as Pruett (1982) states, is useful in determining strengths and weaknesses of the student. The specific skill tested will be indicated. The CAT can also indicate strengths and weaknesses of an entire class. The interpretive results can be useful in that instructional skills are prioritized. Because the skills are prioritized, teachers will know the sequence to teach needed skills (Pruett, 1982). With this information, weak skills can be pin-pointed. The results can also be useful to teachers in forming groups within the classroom. The ideal usefulness of the CAT is to administer the test once in the fall and again in the spring. This could determine student progress, skill mastery, or detect regression, if that be the case, for each school year (Pruett, 1982).

The Educational Quality Assessment on the elementary level, is another assessment that is useful. The test is used to gain information about the school from the teacher perspective (Hertzog, 1983). The test is taken by students with parents' written permission. Participants are unidentifiable. Students are encouraged to omit items that are too personal. Areas tested include self-confidence, understanding others, reading comprehension, interest in learning, and creative activities (Hertzog, 1983). The EQA indicates a positive relationship between parental education and student achievement. Other indicators were that student behaviors determine class size. The size of the class has no affect on high or low achievement (Hertzog, 1983). If a class is well disciplined a teacher can manage a larger class. Smaller classes are needed where there are discipline problems.

The Metropolitan Achievement Test for reading comprehension has been researched by Rowe (1986). The findings relate that a student scores higher on reading comprehension when there is a purpose question given at the beginning of the test item. The purpose questions serve as a focus in the testing situation. Purpose questions should be designed for children of different ages and different reading abilities. Students with different reading abilities will respond differently to

the same purpose questions (Rowe, 1986).

The Stanford Achievement Test used in Duval County Public Schools tests reading comprehension, math skills, spelling and language skills, vocabulary skills, and listening comprehension (Duval County Public Schools, 1986). An objective analysis sheet is compiled. The analysis determines the child's scoring range. With this knowledge teachers and parents are aware of the child's weaknesses as well as average and above average evaluations in achievement. The analysis also indicates national percentile ranks.

Children in the sixth grade are also a part of a massive testing oriented society. However, the aim of the educational system is to prepare the child for the future. Tests results should be used as a tool to define what the child needs for future preparation.

Tests have a place in the educational system. However, "Test value lies in telling how the children are learning, and this is their major value" (Ravitch, 1984).

Achievement

Achievement is thought of as accomplishments in the academic learning process that can be measured. Achievement can be measured with standardized tests, teacher-made tests, and in some instances, observations. Some factors

that affect achievement are school-related, others are associated with the home, while others relate to the individual child (Greenberg et al., 1982).

School related problems in achievement are school practices, teacher attitudes, teaching styles, curriculum used, and extra curricular activities (Fetler, 1983). Factors within the home that affect achievement are parent attitudes, parent expectations (Posden, 1984), socio-economic status, and the relationship of the child and mother prior to school age (Hess, Holloway, Dickson, & Price, 1984). Learning ability, reading level, and sex differences are other factors that can affect achievement (Marshall, 1984).

Fetler (1983) researched school problems that affect achievement in the sixth grade. Variables were measured in content areas. Findings were that content such as math should be taught with emphasis. Nearly all the math instruction the child receives will be at school, whereas, reading and written expression can be practiced at home. School problems can be improved with a role model. With hard work a school can achieve an increase in measurable achievement (Fetler, 1983).

Teacher attitudes are also important to student achievement (Crocker, Amaria, Banfield, & Sheppard, 1979). Subject matter must be challenging and rewarding

for a teacher to enjoy teaching. Teacher attitudes toward the subject have an effect on the achievement of the students (Kyle, Bonnstetter, McCloskey, & Fults, 1985).

Teaching styles are another school related factor that determines achievement. Kyle et al. (1985) discussed methods used to teach science. The more traditional textbook oriented classes offer very little challenge to students. In contrast, a science class which emphasizes inquiry offers a challenge not only to students, but also to the teacher. Students need to feel free to ask questions and be able to explore on their own. Sanders and Shephardson (1984) indicate that "hands-on" activities are important to the cognitive development. The inquiry group scored higher in scholastic achievement and cognitive development than the traditionally instructed group (Crocker et al., 1979).

The inductive model for teaching social studies to sixth graders is the most effective way to teach (McKinny, Peddicord, Ford, & Larkins, 1984). McKinny et al. (1984) note that the most effective way is to begin with a definition, followed by positive examples, then nonexamples, and lastly, a concept or generalization is formed. This model is less teacher oriented.

Process teaching is also effective in student

achievement (Crocker et al., 1979). Research was made to determine the most achievement in science based on teacher control situations. Three situations were established. The first study indicated more achievement was measured in a classroom of low teacher control. Another situation indicated more teacher control, and as a result more achievement. The third situation indicated that teacher control had nothing to do with the achievement. The third study also notes that effectiveness depends upon the developmental responsibilities of the student (Crocker et al., 1979).

Inference is the heart of reading achievement (Roberg & Flexer, 1984). Conclusions state that formal operation thinking is a factor in the student's success with respect to reading. The knowledge level is necessary to understanding reading in the upper elementary grades. Reading achievement is based on instructional approach, materials used, and logical thinking. Materials should be used that are on the child's level of thinking (Roberg & Flexer, 1984).

Extra-curricular activities in the sixth grade have no effects on achievement in content areas (Kvet, 1985). Students who leave the regular classroom for the study of instrumental music progressed in other areas of reading, language, and math achievement (Kvet, 1985).

However, research indicates that extra-curricular activities should be scheduled during physical education, art classes, or classroom music. Attitudes of teachers, administrators, and parents will have an effect on student achievement and extra-curricular activities.

Parent attitudes and expectations are an important part of student achievement (Posden, 1984). Parents should feel free to visit the school to ask questions concerning the progress of the student. A set of standards and expectations should be discussed at home. Rules involving TV, study time, academic expectations, and self-discipline should be discussed (Posden, 1984). Posden (1984) also supports the idea that some free time should be spent on computer games, reading books, magazines, comics, or playing cards. Posden (1984), discovered that when the child met expectations at home school academics also improved.

Becker and Gersten (1982) researched a select group of low income children. Three years later when the students were in the sixth grade a follow-up was made. This research revealed while the three year control lasted, the students gained achievement in reading and math concepts and computation. Three years later the same students had regressed in achievement. Becker and Gersten (1982) expressed that students do

not lose knowledge. If the instruction does not continue to build on the skills mastered, students will experience a decrease in achievement when compared with middle-income peers. Becker and Gersten (1982) concluded that low income students failed to master reading comprehension at the rate of middle and high-income students. Becker and Gersten (1982) believe that low-income students need highly structured programs with major emphasis on reading comprehension and vocabulary development. These students need high levels of feedback and steps to develop independent reading, writing, and thinking skills.

Another factor in achievement in the sixth grade is the teaching style the mother used with the child during preschool years. Maternal beliefs concerning success and failure may affect responses to performance in later life. Mothers can represent authority or power by making demand. Compliance to rules can be taught by discussing rules and expectations, or mothers can appeal to the child's feelings by expressing consequences of actions, excluding punishment (Hess, Holloway, Dickson, & Price, 1984). Mothers' expectations can affect the child's achievement indirectly by giving a cognitive boost in school related tasks during early years that could contribute later. The level of intelligence of both mother and child should be considered in achievement

(Hess et al., 1984).

Sex is another factor to consider when determining student success. Sex differences related to achievement were studied by Marshall (1984). The findings concluded that females are more likely to solve math computation than males. Males are more likely to solve story problems than females. Math in the sixth grade is not a masculine domain as it is in later years (Marshall, 1984). Reading influences math achievement in solving story problems. Poor readers are poor problem solvers (Marshall, 1984). The CAT indicates that females are better readers than males. This finding shows that problem solving should be easier for females. Other factors that affected problem solving were socio-economic group, primary language, and chronological age (Marshall, 1984). Oriental males scored higher in computation and story problems than in other subjects tested.

A student's level of performance at the concrete and formal operation level is related to achievement (Roberg & Flexer, 1984). Formal thought begins at age eleven, which is basically sixth grade age. Formal thought is the underlying factor to success. It is important to determine what age level inference skills may be presented.

McKinny et al. (1984) believe that teachers should

use some type of reading-recitation when teaching concepts in any subject area.

The achievement of students in the sixth grade is affected by the home and the school environments (Becker & Gersten, 1982). The plunge into adolescence may serve as a disadvantage during testing situations.

A true measure of achievement may occur when all factors work well together. Every consideration should be given to a child during this challenging stage in life. Achievement test scores should not be the final judgment in measuring a child's true worth as a student.

In summary, the adolescent age is a very complicated period in the life of sixth grade students. There are growth changes, emotional changes, and mental changes that occur. Some sixth grade students readily accept these changes while others experience problems. Sixth grade students are also faced with making decisions. Certain levels of maturity are necessary for decision making to be successful.

Success of the sixth grade age child can also depend upon role models. Parents, teachers, and other adults who are involved with the student should be aware of this.

Sixth grade students of today are caught in a test revolution. Tests are used for many reasons.

They are used to determine strengths, weaknesses, and to assess verbal abilities, as well as to diagnose other educational problems. EQA tests indicate relationships between parent education and student. The MAC test relates to reading comprehension. The SAT indicates strengths and weaknesses in other areas of achievement.

While tests have good uses, tests can also be misused. Tests odds are misleading. Tests cannot measure the total child. This is important to remember when assessing the sixth grade student.

Academic achievement, or teacher assigned grades, can be measured by test, teacher-made and standardized, such as the Criterion Reference Test in Reading. Achievement can also be measured by teacher observations. Sixth grade students experience many problems that affect achievement. Teacher attitudes, teaching styles, parent expectations, extra-curricular activities, socio-economic status, sex, maternal influence, self-confidence, and home environment can influence achievement in the sixth grade.

Research supports the fact that the adolescent age, the test conscious society, and the problems that are related to achievement are reasons for an understanding of the adolescent child. Curriculum changes are necessary during the adolescent age. Experiences and

fears should be an integrated part of learning.

Research also states that there are differences between academic achievement, or teacher assigned grades, and scores on standardized tests. While standardized test scores continue to rise, most of the time, there is a decline in teacher assigned grades, or academic achievement. Research has identified variables that cause the decline in academic achievement, or teacher assigned grades. A study needs to be conducted to determine what teachers agree to be the greatest contributing factors to the decline in academic achievement, or teacher assigned grades.

Chapter III

Design of Study

The following procedure was used to determine what factors teachers thought were the causes for the variations between academic achievement, or teacher assigned grades, and standardized test scores for students in the sixth grade.

The study involved thirty-two sixth grade teachers from selected sixth grade centers in Duval County. The group included both male and female teachers, ages ranging from twenty to above fifty-one. The study also included both black and white teachers, teachers with no prior experience to teachers with twenty-five and above years of teaching.

The teachers were given a questionnaire that was designed from research by Posden (1984), Fetler (1983), Ravitch (1984), Becker and Gersten (1982), and Crocker et al. (1979), which identified variables that affected achievement of early adolescents.

The questionnaire was divided into four main categories: Home Related Problems, Socio-economic Status, Child Related Problems, and Teacher Related Problems. The four categories were sub-divided into more specific areas. The areas were ranked by numerals ranging from 5 to 1. Five was the highest indicator

and one ranked the least amount of affect on achievement. Participating teachers were instructed to indicate levels of agreement or disagreement by circling the appropriate numeral. The numerals selected were totaled at face value and averaged. Percentages were used to indicate totals after averaging. The findings were pictorially graphed. (See Appendixes A and B, pp. 38-43).

Chapter IV

Analysis

The teacher questionnaire identified factors that teachers in Duval County consider to be reasons for the variations between academic achievement, or teacher assigned grades, and standardized test scores for sixth grade students.

Thirty-two sixth grade teachers, both male and female, from selected sixth grade centers in Duval County, were given a questionnaire based on research by Posden (1984), Fetler (1983), Ravitch (1984), Becker and Gersten (1982), and Crocker et al. (1979). The questionnaire was divided into four main headings. Each main heading was sub-divided into smaller categories. Teachers were instructed to react to each sub-category by indicating a degree of agreement for each variable. (See Appendix A, P. 38). The variables were numbered from five to one with five indicating the strongest agreement and one indicating strongly disagree. The numerals were totaled at face value and averaged. (See Appendix B, p. 42).

The first area in the questionnaire was Home Related Problems. Research by Posden (1984) identified Parent Attitude as being an important factor in student achievement. The average percentile of the teachers

polled indicated agreement with an average of 4.46%, giving Parent Attitude the highest rank. Responses concerning Parent Expectations indicated agreement with

Insert Figure 1 about here

Posden (1984) with an average of 4.34%. Teachers' responses indicated with an average of 4.25% agreement with Fetler (1983) in that Parent as a Role Model is an important factor that influences student achievement. The Relationship Between the Child and Mother and Parent Education, as researched by Hess et al. (1984), were also identified as important factors receiving averages of 4.09% and 3.91% respectfully, from the teachers in the survey. The four male teachers agreed to a tie between Parent Expectations and Parent as a Role Model.

Data from the teacher questionnaire based on research by Ravitch (1984) and Posden (1984) indicated that Socio-economic Status has an influence on student achievement. Social Class was ranked the higher of the two variables, in that teachers indicated support with an average of 3.66%. The area of Family Income, referenced by Ravitch (1984) and Posden (1984), ranked second with an average of 3.47%. The four male teachers indicated

agreement that Social Class was the more important of the two factors.

Insert Figure 2 about here

Child Related factors which include IQ, Attendance, Home Experiences, Attitude, Past School Experiences, Sex, and Self-confidence were identified by DHEW (1972), Marshall (1984), and Hertzog (1983), as being reasons for achievement problems. The highest ranked category, Self-confidence (Hertzog, 1983) received a percentile of 4.62. Attitude (Posden, 1984) ranked second with 4.49%. Attendance (Greenberg et al., 1983) was ranked

Insert Figure 3 about here

as being in third place with 4.28%. Next in rank were Home Experiences (Becker and Gersten, 1982), with 4.22%. Past School Experiences (Roberg and Flexer, 1984) received 4.13%. Teachers ranked IQ (DHEW, 1972) with 3.84%. Sex (Marshall, 1984) as a factor, received the lowest average with 2.19%. The male teachers indicated that Student Attitude was the most important factor affecting student achievement.

The fourth area was Teacher Related Problems. In

this area a 4.53% average indicated teachers agreed with Fetler (1983) and Crocker et al. (1979) in that Teacher Attitudes were the leading factor which affects student achievement. Crocker et al. (1979) also state that

Insert Figure 4 about here

Teacher Motivation is an important factor. Teachers indicated agreement ranking the category with 4.47%. Classroom Discipline (Hertzog, 1983) followed closely with 4.44%. Teacher Expectations (Thornburg, 1983) were next with an average of 4.13%. Teaching Models, as Rowe (1986) explains, is an important area, as does the 3.94% average indicate agreement. The lowest number of responses ranked was a 3.81% average, which indicated that Teaching Styles, based on research by Pruett and Kyle et al. (1983), had the least amount of influence on student achievement, or teacher assigned grades. The four male teachers participating in the survey indicated a three-way tie between Teacher Attitudes, Teacher Motivation, and Classroom Discipline as being the factors that affect student achievement.

Conclusions

Posden (1984) stated that Parent Attitudes are an important part of student achievement. Sixth grade teachers' responses indicated agreement with Posden. In the area of Home Related Problems, Parent Attitudes (Posden, 1984) were the highest indicator of factors that cause variations between the academic achievement, or teacher assigned grades, and standardized test scores.

In the second area, Socio-economic Status, identified by Ravitch (1984), teachers chose Social Class as the strongest indicator of the two factors. Teachers have indicated that Social Class had more affect on student achievement than did Family Income.

Hertzog (1983) identifies Self-confidence as being important to student achievement. In the area of Child Related factors, teachers agreed that Self-confidence is the most important factor causing the variations between teacher assigned grades and standardized test scores.

In the fourth and final area, Teacher Related Factors, Teacher Attitudes were the strongest indicator. Crocker et al. (1979) state that Teacher Attitudes are important to student achievement. Teachers in Duval County were in agreement with Crocker et al. (1979).

The overall study identified factors that influenced differences between standardized test scores and academic

achievement, or teacher assigned grades. These identified factors concurred with factors identified by research that contributed to this difference and decline in test scores and academic achievement, or teacher assigned grades.

Chapter V

Summary

The purpose of this study was to identify the factors that teachers think are the reasons for the decline in academic achievement for sixth grade students. This study was based on research that supported four main categories, Home Related Problems, Socio-economic Status, Child Related Problems, and Teacher Related Problems, as being factors that affect the academic achievement of sixth grade students. The four areas were then divided into sub-categories.

The first area, Child Related Problems, was based on research by Posden (1984), who stated that Parent Attitudes and Parent Expectations are important to student achievement. Research by Becker and Gersten (1982) indicates that Parent Education is important to student achievement. Hess et al. (1984) write that the Relationship Between the Child and Mother is an important factor. Parent as a Role Model is important, is indicated by Fetler (1983).

The second area of concentration in the survey was Socio-economic Status. Research by Ravitch and Posden (1984) agrees that Social Class and Family Income can affect student achievement.

The third area of concentration was Child Related

Problems. IQ, based on research by DHEW (1972), Attendnace, as stated by Greenberg et al. (1983), Becker and Gersten (1982) agree that Home Experiences are important Child Related areas that could affect student achievement. Roberg and Flexer (1984) indicate that Past School Experiences are necessary for achievement. Sex, as Marshall (1984) states and Self-confidence (Hertzog, 1983) are other factors that affect academic achievement in the sixth grade.

The final area of concentration was Teacher Related Factors. Research by Rowe (1986) indicates that Teaching Models are important. Teaching Styles (Kyle et al., 1985) (Pruett, 1982), Teacher Expectations (Greenberg et al., 1983), Teacher Attitudes (Fetler, 1983), Teacher Motivation (Crocker et al., 1979), and Classroom Discipline (Hertzog, 1983), are included as being other important factors of Teacher Related Factors that affect the achievement of sixth grade students.

The categories and sub-categories were developed into a teacher questionnaire. The questionnaire was distributed to thirty-two sixth grade teachers, both male and female, black and white, who teach at selected sixth grade centers in Duval County. The teachers were asked to respond to the questionnaire by indicating a level of agreement ranging from five to one. Responses

were totaled at face value. The sums of each sub-category were averaged and changed into percentages. The results were pictorially graphed.

The survey revealed in the first area, Child Related Problems, teachers' agreement with Becker and Gersten (1982) in that Parent Attitudes were identified as the most important factor affecting student achievement. In the second area, Social Class was the stronger indicator of the two factors. The third area of concentration, Child Related Factors, the teachers surveyed agreed with Hertzog (1983) indicating Self-confidence as the most important factor. In the fourth area Teacher Attitude (Crocker et al., 1979) was agreed as the most important factor affecting student achievement.

Much research has been written concerning factors that affect achievement for the sixth grade student. Noticeable progress could be made to correct some of the areas indicated in the survey. One recommendation is that teachers could identify at least one weakness in each of the four categories per year, set goals, and seek sources for improvement. The Duval County School System makes available excellent workshops for the benefit of teachers who have a need, or a desire, for self-improvement. There is also a need for parents to promote educational excellence at home. There is a

need for self-improvement in parents in the area of Attitudes and Expectations. Parents should establish communication with the school, the teacher, and the child. Through better communication parent-teacher conferences could be conducted with open minds. Parents should be ready to accept an honest view of the child's weaknesses and shortcomings, as well as the good qualities. Your Child From Six to Twelve, a booklet published by DHEW (1972) should be given to the parents of school-age children. With the knowledge that could be gained from reading this book parents could become more aware of parenting skills and expectations, and how to execute such. Parents might understand the importance of establishing certain expectations with the child. The established expectations could include rules involving places to study, study time, quality of work expected, and anticipated grades. Research by Posden (1984) stated that when expectations established by the parent with the child were met academic achievement improved.

Social class is an important factor in student achievement. In a study made by Becker and Gersten (1982) findings revealed that low-level income students were unable to compete academically with middle-income peers. Social Class can be experienced vicariously.

One recommendation in attempting to close the social gap is to generate an environmental enrichment balance for low-income students. Enrichment could include experience books and creative do-it-yourself activities. Enrichment of this type might provide more meaningful childhood experiences, thus attempting to improve academic achievement of low-income students.

Self-confidence, the third area of the survey is important to the child. Most children gain self-confidence if praise is given. A warm classroom climate, established by the teacher, encourages student involvement. Teachers, parents, and other adults in contact with children should take time to listen to children and reinforce successes.

Teacher Attitudes, the fourth area, might improve if teachers were free to make some decisions that involve the curriculum, materials to be used, and the general lesson format. The school system could work to improve attitudes through workshops involving child behaviors and problems that relate to teaching. There is a need for teachers to be heard when the system makes decisions involving teachers.

Based on these suggestions, some of the negative factors affecting student achievement might diminish and student achievement could be on the level with the standardized test scores for sixth grade students in Duval County.

Appendix A

Questionnaire: Achievement Problems in the Sixth Grade

You were selected to participate in a survey that is being conducted in a graduate research at the University of North Florida. This survey is designed to determine what factors teachers think are causes for variations between the academic achievement, or teacher assigned grades, and standardized test scores of students in the sixth grade.

This survey will take approximately five minutes to complete.

Please respond to all items in this survey by circling the response that is the closest to your opinion.

Teacher Participant Data:

I. Sex

1. Female

2. Male

II. Age

1. 20 to 30

2. 31 to 40

3. 41 to 50

4. 51 or above

III. Years in Present Position

1. 0 to 5

2. 6 to 10

3. 11 to 15

4. 16 to 25

5. 26 or above

(appendix a continues)

IV. Ethnic Background

1. American Indian
2. Asian-American
3. Black
4. Spanish-American
5. White
6. Other

V. Location of School

1. Arlington
2. Beaches
3. Downtown
4. Northside
5. Southside
6. Westside

(appendix a continues)

Factors Affecting Student Achievement

40

To what degree do you believe these factors affect student achievement, or teacher assigned grades?

	Strongly Agree	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Disagree Somewhat	Strongly Disagree
I. Home Related Problems					
1. Parent attitude toward school	5	4	3	2	1
2. Parent expectations	5	4	3	2	1
3. Parent education	5	4	3	2	1
4. Relationship between child and mother	5	4	3	2	1
5. Parent as a role model	5	4	3	2	1
II. Socio-economic Status					
1. Family income	5	4	3	2	1
2. Social class	5	4	3	2	1
III. Child Related					
1. IQ	5	4	3	2	1
2. Attendance	5	4	3	2	1
3. Home experiences	5	4	3	2	1
4. Attitude	5	4	3	2	1
5. Past school experiences	5	4	3	2	1

(appendix a continues)

Factors Affecting Student Achievement

41

	Strongly Agree	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Disagree Somewhat	Strongly Disagree
6. Sex	5	4	3	2	1
7. Self-confidence	5	4	3	2	1
IV. Teacher Related					
1. Teaching methods	5	4	3	2	1
2. Teaching styles	5	4	3	2	1
3. Teacher expectations	5	4	3	2	1
4. Teacher attitudes	5	4	3	2	1
5. Teacher motivation	5	4	3	2	1
6. Classroom discipline	5	4	3	2	1

Appendix B

Questionnaire Results

	Strongly Agree	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Disagree Somewhat	Strongly Disagree
I. Home Related Problems					
1. Parent attitude toward school	22	6	4	0	0
2. Parent expectations	15	13	4	0	0
3. Parent education	10	11	9	2	0
4. Relationship between child and mother	15	7	8	2	0
5. Parent as a role model	15	11	5	1	0
II. Socio-economic Status					
1. Family income	5	10	12	5	0
2. Social Class	5	14	10	3	0
III. Child Related					
1. IQ	6	16	9	1	0
2. Attendance	14	13	5	0	0
3. Home experiences	13	13	6	0	0
4. Attitude	23	7	1	0	1
(appendix b continues)					

	Strongly Agree	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Disagree Somewhat	Strongly Disagree
5. Past school experiences	11	15	5	1	0
6. Sex	1	2	7	14	8
7. Self-confidence	23	6	3	0	0
IV. Teacher Related					
1. Teaching methods	7	17	7	1	0
2. Teaching styles	7	15	7	2	1
3. Teacher expectations	11	16	3	2	0
4. Teacher attitudes	19	11	2	0	0
5. Teacher motivation	18	11	3	0	0
6. Classroom discipline	18	11	2	1	0

Figure Caption

Figure I. Average percentile of factors, Home Related Problems, that teachers think are reasons for the differences between academic achievement, or teacher assigned grades, and standardized test scores, for sixth grade students.

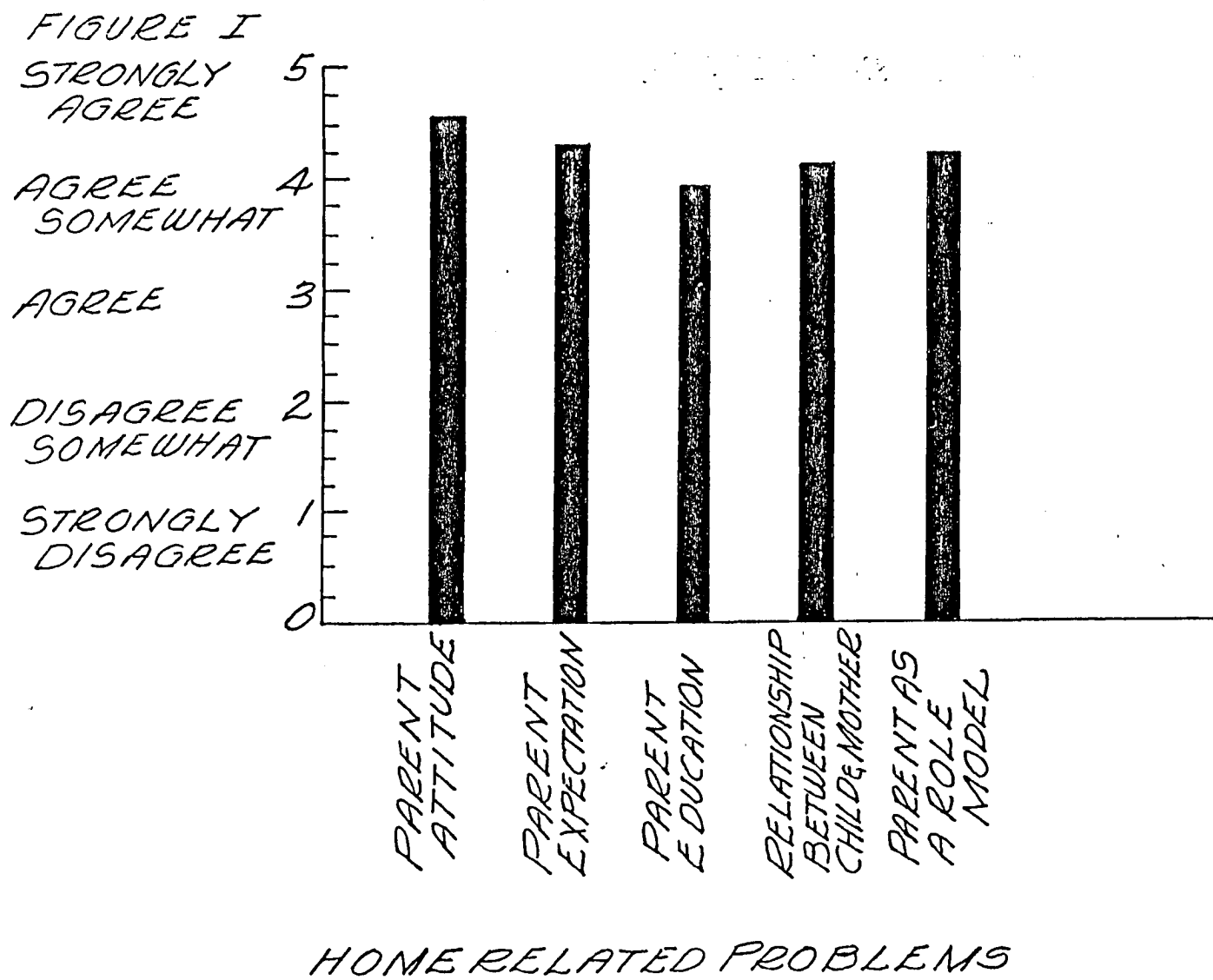


Figure Caption

Figure II. Average percentile of factors, Socio-economic Status, that teachers think are reasons for the differences between academic achievement, or teacher assigned grades, and standardized test scores, for sixth grade students.

FIGURE II

STRONGLY AGREE 5

AGREE SOMEWHAT 4

AGREE 3

DISAGREE SOMEWHAT 2

STRONGLY DISAGREE 1

0

FAMILY
INCOME

SOCIAL
CLASS

SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS

Figure Caption

Figure III. Average percentile of factors, Child Related, that teachers think are reasons for the difference between academic achievement, or teacher assigned grades, and standardized test scores, for sixth grade students.

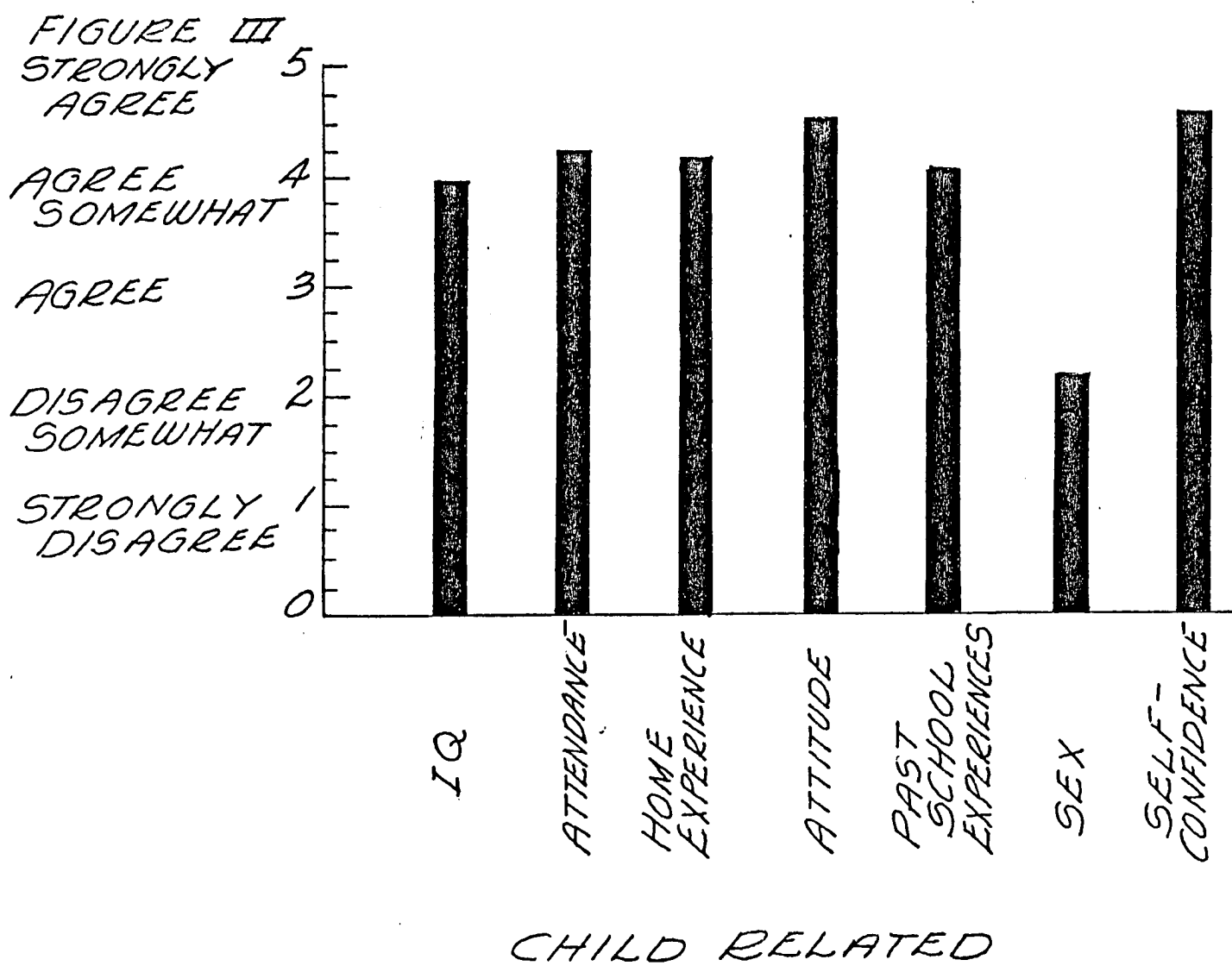


Figure Caption

Figure IV. Average percentile of factors, Teacher Related, that teachers think are reasons for the differences between academic achievement, or teacher assigned grades, and standardized test scores, for sixth grade students.

FIGURE IV

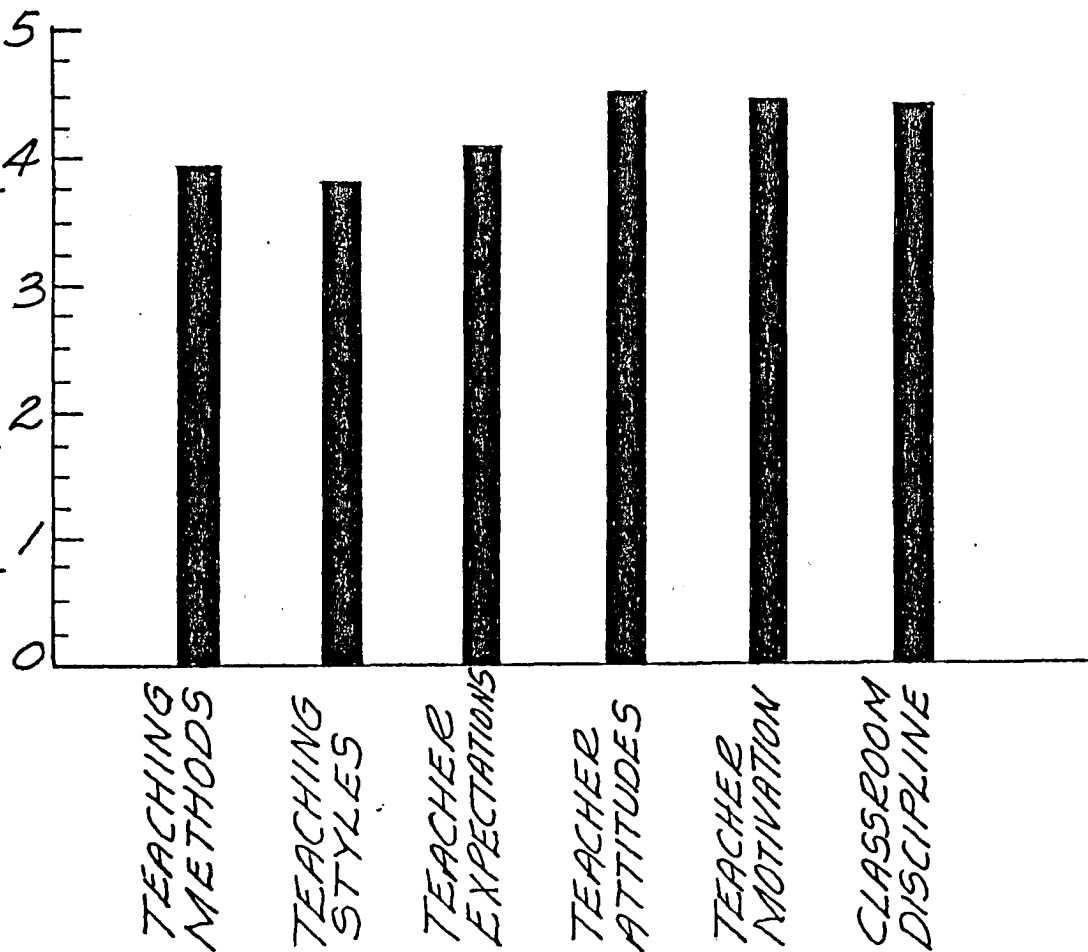
STRONGLY 5
AGREE

AGREE 4
SOMEWHAT

AGREE 3

DISAGREE 2
SOMEWHAT

STRONGLY 1
DISAGREE



TEACHER RELATED

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